

Against the Grain

Volume 26 | Issue 2

Article 54

2014

At Brunning: People and Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do

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Recommended Citation

Brunning, Dennis (2014) "At Brunning: People and Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 2, Article 54.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6739>

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Tubes

My iPhone, on Wi-Fi, used to try to log me into any WIFI Router along my way. One router near campus bore the moniker THEINTERNETISASERIESOFTUBES.

Ted Stevens, Alaska's late senior senator, explained the Internet thus in a 2006 senate hearing on net neutrality. His major point was that as traffic increased, the networks would have to expand through improvements or contract through fees and taxes.

His words went viral in the online world whose libertarian and utopian goals and ideals were well settled. Besides, the Senator had built that bridge to nowhere, he excelled at pork; naturally nothing he said could be taken seriously.

Stevens however, were he alive and kicking, might have the last laugh. By likening the Internet to a plumbing or electrical wiring, he was trying to shift to a more fitting metaphor to characterize the real nature of the Internet. Those who wanted the Internet to be free preferred to liken the Internet to a road, an information highway, built to move person and freight as freely as possible. Roads were a public utility or a public good.

Recent court rulings and business deals mark a notable turn in metaphor and real behavior. Recently the Supreme Court ruled that Internet providers like **Verizon** could make deals with content providers like **Netflix** to charge customers more for higher speed and data services. They ruled that customers could pay more for a wider highway, bigger pipes, more bulky tubes.

Hot on the heels of this decision, **Netflix** and **Comcast** agreed to do just that, a move both had resisted throughout the defining period of net neutrality. For some time now, **Netflix** had proposed to **Comcast** and other cable providers to put their own servers into the server farms of the providers for faster and higher capacity downloads. The catch was that **Netflix** didn't want to pay more for this; they argued that this would help **Comcast** serve its customers better.

Netflix will now route its video streams through third-party servers that interconnect the two companies. And **Netflix** will be charged for these services. Customers who want high-speed service will eventually experience higher prices probably from both companies.

Until recently **Google** and other Silicon Valley Internet companies supported and lobbied for net neutrality. They've grown silent since the SOPA legislation fell defeated in 2012. Lately, they've let **Netflix** shape the argument with legislators. **Netflix** seems to be raising a white flag in the struggle.

Yes, the net is growing up with all of those who work and play on it. It is no longer an almost free service in our lives. Its tubes have been squeezed. We owe **Senator Stevens** who

called the metaphor right. But his people have that bridge to nowhere.

What's up, Zuck?

Bugs Bunny would understand WhatsApp's rocket rise in valuation...a bushel of carrots...

This is what Bugs Bunny would hear if he met **Brian** and **Jan**, two guys who created **WhatsApp** in their own version of a Silicon Valley garage in 2009. BTW, they are now the world's most recent billionaires:

WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows you to exchange messages without having to pay for SMS. WhatsApp Messenger is available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Windows Phone, Android, and Nokia.

Bugs would also learn, between chops on his bright orange carrot, that although **Brian** and **Jan** slaved at **Yahoo!** for a decade running the advertising platform, they agreed in principle with another stated principle from the canonic Geekster movie, *Fight Club*:

Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy stuff we don't need. — Tyler Durden, Fight Club

On February 19, 2014, **Facebook Inc.** announced it is buying **WhatsApp Inc.** for US\$19 billion. **Facebook** will pay \$4 billion in cash, \$12 billion in **Facebook** shares, and \$3 billion in restricted stock units to be granted to **WhatsApp** founders and employees that will vest over four years.

Right now, the new owners, **Facebook**, and the new **WhatsApp** billionaires are able to eat Carrot and the carrot cake, too. **Facebook** stock rose just as it did when they proved they were serious about mobile. This is one more piece of that mobility strategy.

The **Facebook** phone failed because **Facebook** isn't a cell phone company. Most every one of its registered users had cell phones and the loyalty that comes with it. With **WhatsApp**, **Facebook** may be repeating themselves. And they will be going up against cell phone providers who are important to them in mobile advertising.

Others have commented that **WhatsApp** current success is that it exploits a loophole in provider pricing. Today cell phone providers sell access to a network and price for the access. **WhatsApp** and similar products exploit the fact that now providers do not differentiate use. Once everyone is using the loophole, it is bound to be closed up.

A founder and CEO of **WhatsApp Inc.**, **Jan Koum**, worked hard on his napkin concept and paid his dues, struggling since 2009 for his big pay day. In the days since, he appears in press as the quintessential Web entrepreneur

and evangelist, proclaiming how awesome it is to be part of **Facebook** yet autonomous. The vision thing is that all is data and technologies built on some other unit of delivery and measure is over. Into the breach steps **WhatsApp**.

Koum is correct. It's all about data now, the ones and zeroes. Whether this observation is transformational is another claim altogether. We've seen in our own part of the online world that data is easiest to access when it is free. In library-land we've used open as our surrogate term but let's face it, we mean free.

Verizon, **Vodafone**, **T-Mobile**, and **AT&T** remain largely unaffected by the free movements disrupting publishing. Like **Google**, they sit at one end of the network. They are in charge of delivery of the data.

The library angle or take away: get there first, sign them up, find a **Facebook**.

Read a Book (verb indicative)

The Library: A World History, text by **James W.P. Campbell** and photographs by **Will Pryce** is a stunning example of large format coffee book that rewards the reader with every ounce of effort of its makers. This includes the guys just mentioned but also the **University of Chicago Press**, the libraries featured, their librarians and staff, and all of us who support the library.

Libraries get love over 300 pages of photographs, interior and exterior, of libraries from all over the world and its history. Included are elevations, detailed photographs, and sumptuous words that infuse the visuals with meaning.

No architecture collection should go without it despite its Z classification. One library elevation or model should be part of all design education (which is may be). The concept of the library challenges builders and designers with how to collect, catalog, store, and preserve the written record in book form. This is as noble as it is essential.

The Library is perfect in execution down to the exquisite balance of pictorial with information. Even the aroma of the book triggers memories of another publishing era; dare we call it "bookish?"

The book isn't cheap in the context of Amazon setting the price of new hardcovers in the low teens. Its average based on what a library normally pays. Selecting the title for your library not only acquires key historical content but also illustrates the role of the library in leveraging purchases of important but pricey books. It also honors our several millennia of being the key customer of books.

The authors are young. The publisher is a staple of academic and intellectual publishing. It's for all of us who want a testimony to the library, the libraries, and all dedicated to its mission. 🍷